



## **PRESS RELEASE**

Brussels, Belgium – 16 April 2020

### **Residential institutions in the eye of the COVID-19 storm: governments must act quickly to protect residents and personnel**

**The situation of older persons living in residential institutions in several European countries is alarming. Our [recent report](#) sheds light on how the pandemic threatens their human rights and what response is urgently needed.**

Persons living and working in nursing and care facilities are more likely to be exposed to COVID-19 due to close proximity between residents and regular interactions with care staff. Because of underlying multi-morbidities, residents are also at great risks for adverse outcomes. In several countries, half of the deaths due to COVID-19 happens in care homes.

Reports of abandoned or even dead older persons in care institutions are shocking. Cases of older persons living in congregated settings being pressured to sign 'do-not-resuscitate' orders are alarming. Equally worrying are cases of residents being denied access to hospital care for life-saving treatments because they are considered "too old". Such practices are unacceptable human rights violations.

***"We all have the right to access medical, social and palliative care required by our health condition. These fundamental human rights do not diminish with age nor should they be denied to us depending on where we live"*** reminds Anne-Sophie Parent, Secretary General of AGE Platform Europe. In pandemic times when health and care systems are under pressure, ethical protocols are indispensable and chronological age cannot be the sole criterion for triage.

**To put an end to these intolerable violations of human rights affecting the most vulnerable, we urge all national and local health and care authorities to take immediate action:**

- In the **short run**, public authorities must urgently include COVID-19 cases and deaths happening in care institutions in their reports on the pandemic to stop considering COVID-19 related deaths in nursing homes as "normal" or "unavoidable". We also urge them to urgently provide adequate resources for residents and staff to protect themselves adequately since physical distancing is difficult to apply to persons who are dependent on others' support.
- In the **long run**, proper investments will be required in both social and long-term care services to ensure everyone has access to quality living environments and services that respect life choices and rights of individuals in need for support, and adequate working conditions for their carers.

## Useful links

[AGE, Webpage, COVID-19](#)

[AGE, Policy Paper, "COVID-19 and human rights concerns for older persons"](#)

[AGE, Press Release, 7 April, "Investment in health for all: the best reward we can give to nurses"](#)

## About AGE Platform Europe



AGE is a European network of organisations of and for people aged 50+ aiming to voice and promote the interests of the 190 million citizens aged 50+ in the European Union and to raise awareness of the issues that concern them most. [www.age-platform.eu](http://www.age-platform.eu)

## For more information, please contact

Anne Mélard

Communication Officer

[anne.melard@age-platform.eu](mailto:anne.melard@age-platform.eu)

Nena Georgantzi

Human Rights Coordinator

[nena.georgantzi@age-platform.eu](mailto:nena.georgantzi@age-platform.eu)

[www.age-platform.eu](http://www.age-platform.eu)



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